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INFO RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE 0110  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0604  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 7679  
BT  
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ DAMASCUS 07339

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADP  
TAGS: PINS, PREL, LE, SY  
SUBJECT: ASAD RECEIVES FADLALLAH

REF: DAMASCUS 7334

1. (U) THE NOV 11 EDITIONS OF DAMASCUS NEWSPAPERS GIVE PROMINENT DISPLAY TO PRESIDENT ASAD'S NOV 10 AUDIENCE WITH SHAYKH MUHAMMAD HUSAYN FADLALLAH, ONE OF THE MOST PROMINENT OF LEBANON'S RADICAL SHI'ITE LEADERS. ASAD AND FADLALLAH, WHO IS BELIEVED TO BE THE HEAD OF THE HIZBALLAH FACTION, CONDUCTED DISCUSSIONS WHICH, ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, "CENTERED ON THE LEBANESE SCENE, AND ON ISRAELI PLANS TO CONTINUE THE OCCUPATION OF LEBANESE TERRITORY."

2. (C) COMMENT: ASAD NORMALLY HAS HIS UNDERLINGS DEAL WITH SUCH RADICAL ELEMENTS AS HIZBALLAH. HIS PUBLIC RECEPTION NOW OF FADLALLAH WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY SPURRED BY THE INTENSE LEBANESE SHI'ITE PROTESTS OF THE SYRIAN-APPROVED MAJOURA TALKS WITH ISRAEL, AND BY IRAN'S VITRIOLIC DEREGISTRATION OF THOSE DISCUSSIONS (DESCRIBED IN REFTEL). WE ASSUME ASAD ISSUED STERN WARNINGS AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO BLOCK THE COURSE CHOSEN BY SYRIA AND THE GOL. FACED WITH THE PRIORITY NECESSITY OF HAVING TO STILL SUCH TROUBLED WATERS, ASAD MAY ALSO HAVE RAISED THE SUBJECT OF THE AMERICAN KIDNAPPEES WITH FADLALLAH.

3. (U) BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. EAGLETON  
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